

Business

The Top Dallas Philanthropists Give Big

They donate tens of millions of dollars to aid education, the arts, health care and the environment. Here's why.

By Jeanne Prejean | August 11, 2010 | 12:00 am



Ted and Shannon Skokos at the Winspear Opera House.
photography by Holt Haynsworth



From
D CEO
September
2010



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SHANNON AND TED SKOKOS: "What Can I Do For My Community?"

In May, attorney/investor Ted Skokos' love for racing cars nearly did him in when his Ferrari slammed sideways into a wall going 85 miles per hour at California's Infineon Raceway. Ted's wife, Shannon, also an attorney and a former Miss Arkansas, was in the stands and within seconds was scaling a 10-foot-high wall to get to Ted, who was unconscious. Not only did the accident end Ted's racing days—and nearly kill him—it illustrates how Ted and Shannon are inseparable in their lives and decisions.

Before even meeting in 1999, they shared a common struggle for education. Following his freshman year at the University of Arkansas, Ted's grades faltered and his father cut him off. To survive Ted held multiple jobs, including managing an apartment complex. Shannon, who says that her mom made most of her clothes and that eating out "was a really big deal," entered beauty pageants to get scholarship money to pay for her education at the University of Arkansas.

These early experiences in achieving education—as well as their commitment to Dallas—have been driving forces in the couple's philanthropic endeavors. From a \$500,000 grant given to Super Bowl XLV's SLANT 45 program to underwriting college-bound students, they are personally involved with the progress of their investments. When the couple gave \$10 million to the new AT&T Performing Arts Center, the center named the stage at the Winspear Opera House and the pavilion at the Annette Strauss Artist Square in their honor.

"If you have the ability to help someone else, it is your responsibility to do it," Shannon says. "We should make sure that when we leave this world, we leave it better than we found it. It can't be about me, me, me; what have you done for me lately? It should be about what can I do for my community?"